

Exhibit 2

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
GAINESVILLE DIVISION

Santana Bryson and Joshua
Bryson, as Administrators
of the Estate of C.Z.B.,
and as surviving parents
of C.Z.B., a deceased
minor,

CIVIL ACTION
FILE NO.
2:22-CV-017-RWS

Plaintiffs,

vs.

Rough Country, LLC,

Defendant.

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REMOTE VIDEOTAPED DEPOSITION OF

CHRISTOPHER D. ROCHE

10:12 a.m.

February 1, 2024

Susan M. Pitts, CCR-B-1806, RPR

1 the front structure, essentially I would say B-pillar  
2 forward, was already -- was already established. And  
3 so our work focused on looking at the structural  
4 solutions to convert it from a SUV or CUV type body  
5 structure to an open bed type structure.

6 Q. And moving back to your time at Incat  
7 Systems, and I guess your time at Incat involved  
8 working with Jeep or Daimler-Chrysler as kind of a  
9 contractor to Incat Systems, Inc.; is that correct?

10 A. That's right.

11 Q. And we mentioned a couple of vehicles that  
12 you worked on, Jeep vehicles. Did your work with any  
13 of those involve designing and/or testing the primary  
14 energy-absorption structures and/or the secondary  
15 energy-absorber structure?

16 A. Yes. The SJ program that I mentioned  
17 earlier, my -- part of my responsibility there was  
18 developing a front structure that would be considered  
19 a secondary EA.

20 Q. And when you say the SJ, is that the 2005  
21 Jeep Grand Cherokee?

22 A. No, it is not.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. It is the third bullet point at the end,  
25 third from last bullet point. So it reads:

1 Structural engineer on a Jeep body-on-frame SUV that  
2 included performing FEA to meet front impact  
3 compatibility requirements.

4 Q. Got you. And what were the front impact  
5 compatibility requirements that you were trying to  
6 meet?

7 A. Those of the EVC. So looking to provide  
8 the geometric and loading requirements.

9 Q. And you kind of broke up. What was the  
10 first thing you said? Did you say it was part of the  
11 EVC?

12 A. Right. So meeting the requirements based  
13 off of the EVC's stipulation for what a secondary EA  
14 structure has to satisfy.

15 Q. All right. So in that case, the 2005 -- I  
16 guess the body-on-frame Jeep, it did not meet Option  
17 1 of the EVC, and so you were working on how do you  
18 comply with the criteria in Option 2. Is that a fair  
19 way to describe that?

20 A. I don't recall exactly where the primary  
21 frame rail lay within Option 1, but the work we were  
22 doing was to provide a lower secondary EA  
23 specifically.

24 Q. How did you complete that work; how did  
25 you satisfy Option 2?

1           A.       Well, so the vehicle in question, SJ  
2       program, was never launched, so this was engineering  
3       to look at design concepts and simulation of those  
4       concepts to whether we could meet the targets that we  
5       had established for the front structure. One of  
6       those targets was to provide a lower structural  
7       enabler for compatibility.

8           Q.       When you say a lower enabler and  
9       structural compatibility, are you referring to a --  
10      what has been referred to before as a SEAS bracket?

11           MR. HILL:   And SEAS for the court reporter  
12      would be S-E-A-S. We are going to use, I guess,  
13      that a lot.

14           If the witness agrees, instead of having  
15      to say "primary energy-absorption structure" and  
16      "secondary energy-absorption structure," can we  
17      agree we can use SEAS, S-E-A-S in all caps, as  
18      an abbreviation for one, and PEAS, P-E-A-S, as  
19      an abbreviation for the other.

20           THE WITNESS:   Yes, I'm fine with that.

21           Q.       (By Mr. Hill) All right. And so what  
22      type of SEAS device or component did you use in  
23      mocking up that SJ program in order to get the SEAS  
24      to the limits you needed to comply with the EVC?

25           A.       It was a design that was -- utilized some

1 of the lower frame structure. It wasn't a separate  
2 bracket in that instance. It wasn't equivalent to  
3 the blocker beam that Ford had on the Excursion at  
4 that time. It was -- it was another part of the  
5 frame structure that we were utilizing.

6 Q. Okay. Jumping up where I got confused,  
7 the third bullet point from the top under the Incat  
8 Systems section is when there's a discussion of the  
9 2005 Jeep Grand Cherokee front-end structure. And  
10 with regard to that vehicle, were you involved in  
11 designing or testing it to see if it complied with  
12 the EVC criteria?

13 A. Yeah. That vehicle -- so I had  
14 responsibility for all structural requirements on the  
15 Body-In-White at points during my tenure on that  
16 program. And that vehicle satisfied the requirements  
17 of the EVC from a PEAS perspective.

18 Q. So it did not require a secondary  
19 energy-absorption structure because it satisfied  
20 Option 1 under the EVC?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. Okay. Any other vehicles that you were  
23 involved in -- I think you mentioned -- going back to  
24 my question as far as listing all the LTVs that you  
25 worked on from the designs testing perspective, have

1 I tried to make it as broad as I could  
2 (inaudible.)

3 MS. CANNELLA: What was that?

4 MR. HILL: I tried to make it as broad as  
5 possible to avoid a bunch of follow-up  
6 questions. Go ahead.

7 THE WITNESS: Yeah, I'm sorry. I didn't  
8 catch your question originally, so would you  
9 mind repeating it, please?

10 Q. (By Mr. Hill) Sure. I'm sure you're  
11 going to get the question at trial from Ms. Cannella  
12 for you to explain to the jury your work experience  
13 that qualifies you to talk about the issues in the  
14 case. And I'm trying to determine whether there is  
15 any relevant work experience that you have that we  
16 haven't discussed that relates specifically to the  
17 design and development of primary energy-absorption  
18 structures and/or secondary energy-absorption  
19 structures?

20 MS. CANNELLA: Same objection. You can  
21 answer.

22 THE WITNESS: Yeah. So the '05 Grand  
23 Cherokee I worked on that program from concept  
24 to production and post production. A lot of my  
25 work involved the development of the front-end

1 sheet metal, including the longitudinal members,  
2 the front bumper system, shock towers. That  
3 structure was developed to meet the targets that  
4 were established by the program for and  
5 including all compliance testing, US NCAP and  
6 IHS test modes and other due care load cases. I  
7 worked on that program from the design  
8 simulation, test and compliance phases. So I  
9 think that's very relevant from a primary  
10 energy-absorbing structure development  
11 perspective.

12 Q. (By Mr. Hill) And that vehicle did not  
13 require a SEAS because it met the requirements of  
14 Option 1 under the EVC?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Okay. Anything else that I've missed?

17 A. Well, we talked a little bit earlier about  
18 the SJ program where in that instance I was involved  
19 in the development of a secondary energy-absorbing  
20 structure.

21 Q. All right. I think that was covered by --  
22 in something we haven't already discussed that would  
23 relate to these issues?

24 A. Okay. So those are the two relevant  
25 programs I would highlight.



1           A.       Yes. I believe it's possible to engineer  
2 a new SEAS bracket that could satisfy the Option 2  
3 requirements of the EVC.

4           Q.       And while we are on that -- I know we are  
5 going to cover this in detail later -- but as you  
6 measured the Hunter Elliott's F-250 involved in this  
7 accident, you concluded that the SEAS brackets that  
8 were on the vehicle only extended down to 18 inches  
9 above the ground, approximately. And so that I  
10 understand it, in order to comply with Option 2 of  
11 the EVC, they would have to have extended down to 16  
12 inches. And so your criticism of that is that in  
13 order for it to comply with Option 2, the SEAS  
14 brackets would have to be two inches longer extending  
15 down to 16 inches or below; is that a fair statement?

16          A.       No. It's more complicated than that.

17          Q.       All right. Tell me how it's more  
18 complicated.

19          A.       The base vehicle height of the SEAS  
20 bracket from ground was about 13 inches based on the  
21 exemplar truck I measured. And then in addition to  
22 the SEAS bracket distance to ground, it also has to  
23 have -- it has to satisfy the load requirements. So  
24 you have to develop a SEAS bracket that is  
25 consistent, I think, with the original manufacturer

1 intent. At a minimum, you would be looking at least  
2 to satisfy the Option 2 of the EVC, but, ideally, you  
3 would maintain the base truck compatibility design.

4 Q. So what you mean there is that you would  
5 ideally have brackets that would extend all the way  
6 down to the original height without the lift kit, so  
7 down to 13 inches above the ground; is that what you  
8 are saying?

9 A. Yeah. On the basis that Ford developed  
10 that design 13 inches off ground to achieve  
11 compatibility, if you want to maintain the same level  
12 of compatibility performance, that would be where you  
13 would engineer to.

14 Q. Okay. So that's one alternative design,  
15 is engineer new bolt-in brackets that would extend  
16 down to the 13-inch level and have the same strength  
17 and so forth that's required under Option 2 or that  
18 was with the original design?

19 MS. CANNELLA: Sorry. Can you repeat that  
20 question?

21 MR. HILL: Sure.

22 MS. CANNELLA: I missed it.

23 MR. HILL: I just want to make sure I  
24 understand what he just said.

25 Q. (By Mr. Hill) So one alternative design

1 I'm talking about. It's a Qualified Vehicle  
2 Modifiers Program. It dealt with outside  
3 companies that performed modifications to Ford  
4 vehicles.

5 THE WITNESS: Yeah, I'm familiar with QVM.

6 Q. (By Mr. Hill) Are you familiar with  
7 Ford's QVM program?

8 A. Yeah, I've -- I've worked on the program  
9 that looked at engaging with a Ford product and a  
10 modification of it.

11 Q. And what was that modification?

12 A. Well, so the idea of that was to take the  
13 Ford E-450 and -- as a chassis cab and to build a  
14 small shuttle bus, which is typically done by a  
15 number of different upfitters.

16 Q. And what was your interaction with the QVM  
17 program in connection with that E450?

18 A. So we requested to become -- to gain  
19 access to the necessary Ford product data to be able  
20 to use it as a basis for the vehicle we had in mind.  
21 And so there's a process to register and become a  
22 recipient of much more detailed engineering data,  
23 including Ford vehicle cab data, for example, and so  
24 that's -- that's really the interaction I've had with  
25 QVM is getting additional data from them in a role

1 that I performed back in -- this was around 2020.

2 Q. Did any representatives from Ford's QVM  
3 program actually visit your manufacturing facilities?

4 A. Yes. The work I was doing was at an early  
5 stage before we had manufacturing facilities, so it  
6 was an engineering office. And yes, we had some  
7 interaction with a representative from QVM because  
8 they wanted to understand a little bit what we had in  
9 mind for the vehicle and, you know, what their plans  
10 were for the platform, things of that nature.

11 Q. And did you have to actually go through  
12 any type of qualifying or certifying process in order  
13 to get the assistance from the Ford QVM program?

14 A. For the initial data access, no, not very  
15 much. It was just a request in telling them who we  
16 were and what we intended to do with it. It was  
17 fairly straightforward.

18 Q. Did you ever go forward with production of  
19 that modified E-450?

20 A. No, not while I was with the company that  
21 was working on it.

22 Q. All right. And do you know whether after  
23 you left, they went forward with production of that  
24 vehicle?

25 A. I don't know what the status is of that

1 involve removal of the brackets?

2 A. No. I don't know of an alternative SEAS  
3 bracket that's EVC compliant of any description.

4 Q. Okay. Have you ever removed, yourself, a  
5 SEAS bracket?

6 A. I have not. But I do have one here, so  
7 I'm quite familiar with what it looks like and its  
8 size and weight.

9 Q. Right. Have you ever in the field  
10 attempted to remove a attached SEAS bracket from an  
11 F-250?

12 A. No, I haven't.

13 Q. Have you ever seen someone attempt that?

14 A. No, but it's not particularly challenging.

15 Q. And what is the basis of your opinion that  
16 it's not particularly challenging?

17 A. It's at the front of the vehicle. It's  
18 accessible. The tools required are basic socket set  
19 or wrench, and it's just two bolts.

20 Q. And you have to be able to get out up  
21 underneath the vehicle to remove the bolts, correct?

22 A. Well, on a lifted truck, it's quite  
23 accessible.

24 Q. Well, you don't know where that lifted  
25 truck is sitting. It could be, in order to reinstall

1 A. No, I didn't.

2 Q. Did you need to look at other lift kits to  
3 know if there is an alternative design, the one that  
4 you -- strike that, sorry.

5 Did you need to look at other lift kits to  
6 come to your alternative design conclusion?

7 A. No, I didn't.

8 Q. Where did you get your alternative design  
9 idea from?

10 A. From the subject vehicle and my design and  
11 engineering experience.

12 Q. And the design that you looked at on the  
13 subject vehicle, that is in production?

14 A. Yes, it is.

15 Q. And it's used on an F-250?

16 A. That's correct.

17 Q. Have you ever used a socket set or a  
18 wrench before?

19 A. Yes, I have.

20 Q. Have you removed bolts before?

21 A. Yes, I have.

22 Q. And we discussed your experience in the  
23 auto industry. How many years have you been in the  
24 auto industry?

25 A. About 27 years.